



AIRC NEWS

Newsletter from the American Information Resource Center (AIRC), Chennai
July - September, 2005

From the Publisher:

Greetings.



This July Fourth commemorates 229 years of American independence, providing an ideal opportunity to examine the tremendous impact of the 1776 American Revolution on the rest of the world. Though notably followed by the French revolution in 1789, American Independence and the ideals of democracy it promulgated have met with unfaltering attention worldwide, as evidenced by the world's largest multiethnic democracy to date: India. As an admirer of both Indian and American history, I can attest that these two great nations followed very different and arduous paths through the course of time, and yet inevitably—and proudly—arrived upon the same summit of democracy. *1776*, a most engaging and well-researched book by David McCollough, documents the story of the American Revolution and provides remarkable insight for all global citizens. This book is bound to resonate in India, whose citizens also resolutely attained democracy and independence and marched into the pages of history. Check it out at AIRC.

In keeping with the spirit of 4th of July, AIRC would also like to highlight a bedrock value of American culture that is common to every society: the family. In the 1950s, a specific notion of the nuclear family came to be associated with American culture. Yet as there are traditional families comprised of mothers, fathers, sons and daughters, the diversity that emblemizes American cultures renders the concept of family equally varied. While the structure of the American family has proven more fluid than the image affixed by popular culture, what remains steadfast as ever is the American commitment to the family, whatever shape and form it may take.

It is in this context I have included the article by Stephanie Coontz in this issue. Finally, I encourage you to explore the website at <http://usinfo.state.gov> for more information and welcome you to visit the volumes of resources available at the AIRC—they are truly invaluable!

Ravi Candadai
Consul for Public Affairs

DATES TO REMEMBER:

July 4, 1776 - Declaration of Independence of
Approval and Signing: Anniversary
September 5 - Labor Day
September 17-23 - Constitution Week

THE AMERICAN FAMILY: WHERE WE ARE TODAY

By Stephanie Coontz

Modern life can be stressful -- in the family as anywhere else in our fast-paced society. And yet, with all the challenges and concerns about relationships, marriage and raising children, people in the United States today have higher expectations of parenting and marriage. In comparing the present with the past -- the so-called "good old days" -- we need to realize that many of our worries reflect how much better we *want* to be, not how much better we used to be.

Let's consider pieces of evidence.

Fathers in intact families are spending more time with their children than at any point in the past 100 years. Although the number of hours the average woman spends at home with her children has declined since the early 1900s, as more and more women enter the workforce, there has been a decrease in the number of children per family and an increase in individual attention to each child. As a result, mothers today in the United States -- including those who work part- or full-time -- spend almost twice as much time with each child as mothers did in the 1920s. People who raised children in the 1940s and 1950s typically report that their own adult children and grandchildren communicate far better with their kids and spend more time helping with homework than they did.

America's children are also safer today than they've ever been. An infant was four times more likely to die in the 1950s than today. A parent then was three times more likely than a modern one to preside at the funeral of a child under the age of 15, and 27 percent more likely to lose an older teen to death.

If we look back over the last millennium, we can see that families have always been diverse and in flux. In each period, families have solved one set of problems only to face a new array of challenges. What works for a family in one economic and cultural setting doesn't work for a family in another. What's helpful at one stage of a family's life may be destructive at the next stage. If there is one lesson to be drawn from the last millennium of family history, it's that families always have to play "catch-up" with a changing world.

Take the issue of working mothers. Families in which mothers spend as much time earning a living as they do raising children are nothing new. They were the norm throughout most of the last two millennia. In the 19th century, married women in the United States began a

withdrawal from the workforce, but for most families this was made possible only by sending their children out to work instead. When child labor was abolished, married women began re-entering the workforce in ever larger numbers.

For a few decades, the decline in child labor was greater than the growth of women's employment. And so the male-breadwinner family surfaced. In the 1920s, for the first time, a bare majority of U.S. children grew up in families in which the husband provided all the income, the wife stayed home full-time, and they and their siblings went to school instead of to work. This pattern continued for decades. During the 1950s, almost two-thirds of the nation's children grew up in such families, an all-time high. Yet that same decade saw an acceleration of workforce participation by wives and mothers that soon made the dual-earner family the norm -- a trend not likely to be reversed in this new century.

What's new is not that women make half their families' living, but that for the first time they have substantial control over their own income, along with the social freedom to determine the shape of their own lives. Also new is the declining proportion of their lives that people devote to raising children, both because they have fewer kids and because they are living longer. Until about 1940, the typical marriage ended with the death of one partner within a few years after the last child left home. Today, couples can look forward to spending more than two decades together after the children leave.

The growing length of time partners spend with only each other for company, in some instances, has made individuals less willing to put up with an unhappy marriage, while women's economic independence makes it less essential for them to do so. Thus, on the one hand, there has been a steady rise in the U.S. divorce rate since 1900. But on the other, expanded life expectancies mean that more couples are reaching their 40th and 50th anniversaries than ever before.

Women's new options are good not just for themselves but for their children as well. Studies have shown that kids do better in their own right when their mothers are happy with their lives, whether that satisfaction comes from being a full-time homemaker or from full-time employment. And largely because of women's new roles at work, men are assuming more of a role at home.

Although most men still do less housework than their wives, that gap has been halved since the 1960s. Today, 49 percent of couples say they share childcare equally, compared with 25 percent in 1985. Men's greater involvement at home is good for their relationships with their spouses, and also good for their children. Hands-on fathers make better parents than men who let their wives do all the nurturing and childcare. They raise sons who are more expressive and daughters who are more likely to do well in school -- especially in math and science.

In 1900, life expectancy in the United States was 47 years, and only four percent of the population was 65 or older. Today, life expectancy is 76 years, and by 2025, it is estimated, about 20 percent of the U.S. population will be 65 or older. For the first time, a generation of adults must plan for the needs of both their parents and their children. Most Americans are responding with remarkable grace. One in four households gives the equivalent of a full day a week or more in unpaid care to an aging relative, and more than half say they expect to do so in the next 10 years. Older people are less likely to be impoverished or incapacitated by illness than in the past, and have more opportunity to develop a relationship with their grandchildren.

Even some of the choices that worry people the most are turning out to be manageable. Divorce rates are likely to remain high, and in many cases marital breakdown causes serious problems for both adults and kids. Yet when parents minimize conflict, family bonds can be maintained. And many families are doing this. More non-custodial parents are staying in touch with their children. Child-support receipts are rising. A lower proportion of children from divorced families are exhibiting problems than in earlier decades. And stepfamilies are learning to maximize children's access to supportive adults rather than cutting them off from one side of the family.

As we begin to understand the range of sizes, shapes and colors that distinguish families in the United States today, we find that the differences *within* family types are more important than the differences *between* them. No particular family form guarantees success, and no particular form is doomed to fail. How a family functions on the inside is more important than how it looks from the outside.

The biggest problem facing most families in the United States at the outset of the new century is not that our families have changed too much but that our institutions have changed too little. Work policies reflect an earlier era, when most mothers weren't in the workforce and most fathers weren't involved in the joys of childcare. School schedules often seem designed for decades ago, when children needed to be home to help with chores or to be employed themselves.

Still, while social institutions still have work to do, America's families, for the most part, are entering the new millennium with far more resources, hopes and equal regard for all family members than ever before.

Stephanie Coontz, author of *The Way We Really Are*, is a member of the faculty at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. Copyright © 1999

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AIRC Holidays

July 4 – Independence Day (American)
August 15 – Independence Day (Indian)
September 5 – Labor Day (American)
September 7 – Vinayaka Chaturthi (Indian)

Resources on American Family

Books:

The American Family / edited by Karen Duda. New York, NY: The H.W. Wilson Co., 2003. (306.85 AME)

The Family in America: Searching for Social Harmony in the Industrial Age / Allan Carlson. New Brunswick, NJ : Transaction Publishers, 2003. (306.85 CAR)

The Way we Really are: Coming to Terms With America's Changing Families / Coontz, Stephanie. New York, NY: BasicBooks, 1997. (306.85 COO)

Websites

American Family Association Online
<http://www.afa.net/>

American Family Association of Michigan
<http://www.afamichigan.org/>

At-Home Dad
<http://www.athomedad.com/>

The Center for Work and the Family
<http://www.centerforworkandfamily.com/>

Childless by Choice
<http://now2000.com/cbc/>

ChildStats.gov: Forum on Child and Family Statistics
<http://childstats.gov/>

The Council on Contemporary Families (CCF)
<http://www.contemporaryfamilies.org/>

Eparent.com
<http://www.eparent.com/>

Generations United
<http://www.gu.org/>

National Center on Fatherhood and Families
<http://www.ncoff.gse.upenn.edu/>

National Child Care Information Center
<http://nccic.org/>

National Council on Family Relations
<http://www.ncfr.com/>

U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. Administration for Children and Families
<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/>

Working Moms Refuge
<http://www.momsrefuge.com/>

Disclaimer: Internet sites listed in this listing, other than those of the U.S. government, should not be construed as an endorsement of the views contained therein

10 Surprising Facts About the Fourth of July

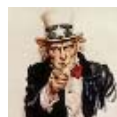
Everyone loves Independence Day, the quintessential American holiday, full of parades, picnics, and ... surprising facts?



1. Independence Day commemorates the formal adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. However, it was not declared a legal holiday until 1941.



2. Fireworks were made in China as early as the 11th century. The Chinese used their pyrotechnic mixtures for war rockets and explosives.



3. Uncle Sam was first popularized during the War of 1812, when the term appeared on supply containers. Believe it or not, the U. S. Congress didn't adopt him as a national symbol until 1961.



4. There are many precise rules for taking care of the American flag. And speaking of flag traditions, we're sorry to report that contrary to legend, historical research has failed to confirm that Betsy Ross sewed the first flag.



5. Not all members of the Continental Congress supported a formal Declaration of Independence, but those who did were passionate about it. One representative rode 80 miles by horseback to reach Philadelphia and break a tie in support of independence.



6. The first two versions of the Liberty Bell were defective and had to be melted down and recast. The third version rang every Fourth of July from 1778 to 1835, when, according to tradition, it cracked as it was being tolled for the death of Chief Justice John Marshall.

7. The American national anthem, the "Star-Spangled Banner," is set to the tune of an English drinking song ("To Anacreon in Heaven").



8. The iron framework of the Statue of Liberty was devised by French engineer Alexandre-Gustave Eiffel*, who also built the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

9. The patriotic poem "America the Beautiful" was published on July 4, 1895 by Wellesley College professor Katharine Lee Bates*.

10. Father of the country and architect of independence George Washington held his first public office at the tender age of 17. He continued in public service until his death in 1799

Source: Microsoft Encarta

**Latest Electronic Journal from U.S. Department of State
Ending Abusive Child Labor**

Full text:

<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/ites/0505/ijee/ijee0505.htm>

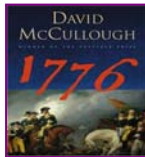
The publication explores a broad range of issues from causes of child labor to the actions being taken by governments to stop trafficking of children. It highlights innovative approaches employed by countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia to better the outlook for their children.



NEW AT AIRC

Books

1776 by David McCullough. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2005



The Art of Governance: Analyzing Management and Administration / Patricia W. Ingraham and Laurence E. Lynn, Jr., editors. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2004 (351 ART)

Bain, Ken. **What the Best College Teachers Do** / Ken Bain. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004 (378.12 BAI)

The Best American Short Stories, 2004 / selected from U.S. and Canadian magazines by Lorrie Moore with Katrina Kenison ; with an introduction by Lorrie Moore. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2004 (BES)

Brooksbank, Roger. **Hot Marketing, Cool Profits: 200 Proven Sales and Marketing Ideas to Grow Your Business** / Roger Brooksbank. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2003 (658.8 BRO)

Cashman, Kevin. **Awakening the Leader Within: A Story of Transformation** / Kevin Cashman with Jack Forem. Hoboken, NJ: J.Wiley, 2003 (658.4092 CAS)

Choi, Susan. **American Woman: A Novel** / Susan Choi. New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2003 (CHO)

Krames, Jeffrey A. **What the Best CEOs Know: 7 Exceptional Leaders and Their Lessons for Transforming Any Business** / Jeffrey A. Krames. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2003 (658.406 KRA)

Lawrence-Lightfoot, Sara. **The Essential Conversation: What Parents and Teachers Can Learn From Each Other** / Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot. New York, NY: Random

House, 2003 (371.192 LAW)

Leonard-Barton, Dorothy. **Deep Smarts: How to Cultivate and Transfer Enduring Business Wisdom** / Dorothy Leonard and Walter Swap. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2005 (658.3124 LEO)

Shieler, David K. **The Working Poor: Invisible in America** / David K. Shieler. New York, NY: Knopf, 2004 (305.569 SHI)

Sowell, Thomas. **Applied Economics: Thinking Beyond Stage One** / Thomas Sowell. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2004 (330 SOW)

Thurow, Lester C. **Fortune Favors the Bold: What We must Do to Build a New and Lasting Global Prosperity** / Lester Thurow. New York, NY: HarperBusiness, 2003 (337 THU)

Articles

AMERICA'S EMPIRE BY DEFAULT

By Carl Cavanagh Hodge. Orbis, Winter 2005, pp. 61-73.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

By Ronald Berenbeim. Vital Speeches of the Day, November 15, 2004, pp. 87-89.

THE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE

By Jeffrey D. Sachs. Foreign Affairs, March/April 2005, pp. 78-90.

DIGITAL RIGHTS AND WRONGS: INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY IN THE INFORMATION AGE

By Norman E. Bowe. Business & Society Review, Spring 2005, pp. 77-96.

THE PERILS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

By Steven Kotler. Psychology Today, March/April 2005, pp. 64-68.

TRADING PLACES

By Peter F. Drucker. National Interest, Spring 2005, pp. 101-107.

CDROM

American Revolution. Shelton, CT: Queue, 1998

This interactive multimedia program includes a variety of information on the American fight for independence. It examines the Revolution from two distinct perspectives: that of the colonies and that of England. The program analyses in detail the personalities, events and forces that lead to the American Revolution.

**American Information Resource Center (AIRC)
United States Consulate General, Gemini Circle, Chennai 600 006
Telephone: 044-28112000, Fax: 044-2811-2053**

Email: Reference: chennaifedesk@state.gov Circulation: chennaicircdesk@state.gov

Website: <http://chennai.usconsulate.gov>

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